

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HB 1755

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government Operations & Accountability

Title: An act relating to voters' pamphlets.

Brief Description: Modifying provisions on voters' pamphlets.

Sponsors: Representatives Green, Shabro, Hunt, McDermott, Haigh, Moeller, Simpson, Schual-Berke and Linville; by request of Secretary of State.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government Operations & Accountability: 2/18/05, 2/22/05 [DP].

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires the Secretary of State to publish a primary voters' pamphlet.
- Changes the appointment process for committees writing arguments for or against statewide ballot measures.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS & ACCOUNTABILITY

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 9 members: Representatives Haigh, Chair; Green, Vice Chair; Nixon, Ranking Minority Member; Clements, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hunt, McDermott, Miloscia, Schindler and Sump.

Staff: Jim Morishima (786-7191).

Background:

The Secretary of State (Secretary) is required to publish a voters' pamphlet whenever at least one statewide measure or office is scheduled to appear on the general election ballot. The Secretary must distribute the pamphlet to each household in the state, to public libraries, or to any other locations he or she deems appropriate. The pamphlet may also be made available in electronic form.

Arguments in the pamphlet advocating the approval or rejection of statewide ballot issues are written by committees. The initial two members of the committees are appointed by the Secretary and the presiding officers of the House of Representatives and the Senate, who must

consider as initial members legislators, sponsors of initiatives and referenda, and other interested groups. The initial two members may then select up to four additional members.

Summary of Bill:

The Secretary must publish a voters' pamphlet whenever at least one statewide measure or office is scheduled to appear on the primary election ballot.

The appointment process for committees writing arguments for or against statewide ballot measures is changed. The Secretary and the presiding officers of the House of Representatives and the Senate must appoint at least one, but no more than two, initial members of the committees. The initial member or members may then appoint the remaining four or five members.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Testimony For: It is important to keep voters informed. The number one tool voters use to inform themselves is the voters' pamphlet. Keeping voters informed for the primary election is important because some offices are elected in the primary. An informed voting public is even more important under the "top two" primary system because the primary is where minor parties get their only chance to be on the general election ballot. House and Senate leadership have not always been able to appoint two people to the committees who write arguments for or against ballot measures. This bill would give them the flexibility to appoint only one member.

Testimony Against: None

Persons Testifying: Representative Green, prime sponsor; Sam Reed, Secretary of State; Shane Hamlin, Office of the Secretary of State; Pat McCarthy, County Auditor's Association; and Chris Stegman, Green Party of Washington State.

Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying: None.